



U.S. Department of Justice

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****CORRECTED****

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CHARGES ANNOUNCED AGAINST 9 ASSOCIATED WITH 2 DRUG TRAFFICKING ORGANIZATIONS; ONE PLEADS GUILTY, ADMITS ORGANIZATIONS DISTRIBUTED 100s OF KILOGRAMS OF COCAINE & HEROIN; DRUGS & \$300,000 IN ASSETS SEIZED

ROCKFORD – PATRICK J. FITZGERALD, United States Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois; RICHARD W. SANDERS, Special Agent in Charge of the Chicago Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration; THOMAS J. KNIER, Special Agent in Charge of the Chicago Division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation; PAUL LOGLI, Winnebago County State's Attorney; RICHARD MEYERS, Winnebago County Sheriff; DUANE E. WIRTH, Boone County Sheriff; STEVEN PUGH, Rockford Police Chief; JAN W. NOBLE, Belvidere Police Chief; and WILLIAM FEITHEN, DeKalb Police Chief, today made the following announcement:

A multi-agency, undercover investigation led by a newly-formed, DEA task force and the Rockford United States Attorney's Office has yielded two federal indictments against eight Rockford men and one woman associated with two related narcotics trafficking organizations. Cooperating in the investigation were the Winnebago County State's Attorney's Office and the Metro Narcotics Unit. One man charged in the indictments announced today has pleaded guilty and admitted that the two organizations used Rockford as a base to distribute hundreds of kilograms of cocaine and heroin.

During the nine-month investigation, the DEA task force seized eight kilograms of cocaine and one kilogram of heroin from the accused traffickers. Authorities also are seeking to forfeit assets valued at over \$300,000, allegedly belonging to members of the two trafficking organizations, under laws authorizing the seizure of properties used to conduct drug businesses or purchased with profits from those illegal businesses. These assets include two houses (*4622* Sunderman Road & 6311 Forest Hills Road, Rockford), eight vehicles, jewelry, cash, and \$21,849 of proceeds from a February 12, 2004 Metro Centre concert allegedly financed by defendant Ricardo Gallardo through a company known as Mindright Entertainment, Inc. The Metrocentre has cooperated fully with the government's efforts to forfeit these concert proceeds.

In pleading guilty to a charge that he conspired with others to distribute narcotics, defendant Jerry Wilson admitted that he obtained a total of at least 150 kilograms of cocaine from a drug conspiracy headed by defendant Ricardo Gallardo and from another drug conspiracy headed by defendant Michael Fricks. Wilson admitted that he was a member of the "Fricks" narcotics trafficking organization. According to Wilson, some of the cocaine he obtained from Fricks was first obtained by Fricks from Gallardo. Wilson also admitted obtaining at least one kilogram of heroin from the Gallardo organization.

****The correct address of this residence is 4622 Sunderman, not 6622 Sunderman.**

In admitting his narcotics trafficking, Wilson acknowledged that Gallardo and Fricks often provided him with drugs on credit, commonly referred to as “fronting” the drugs. Wilson would then sell the cocaine and heroin to others before paying Gallardo and Fricks for what the drugs they had supplied. Wilson admitted that in December 2003, Gallardo “fronted” him nine kilograms of cocaine at one time which Wilson sold to a customer before paying Gallardo \$180,000 for the cocaine. Fricks provided Wilson with up to five kilograms of cocaine at one time, according to Wilson’s admissions at the time of his guilty plea. Wilson admitted that some of the cocaine he obtained was later converted into cocaine base, commonly known as “crack,” which Wilson then sold.

Charged in the indictments announced today are:

Indictment 04 CR 50012

Michael Fricks, 33 (DOB: 10/09/1970), formerly of 6311 Forrest Hills Road, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and cocaine base, four counts of distributing cocaine, one count of manufacturing and distributing cocaine base, one count of distributing cocaine base, and one count of possessing a handgun as a felon. He is being held in federal custody without bail.

Jerry Wilson, 27 (DOB: 5/16/1977), formerly of 3854 Thyme, Rockford, Illinois, had pleaded guilty to one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and cocaine base. He is being held in federal custody without bail.

Lonza Wilson, also known as “Yak,” 30 (DOB: 5/02/74), formerly of 1827 Chestnut Street, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and cocaine base and one count of distributing cocaine base. He is being held in federal custody without bail.

Indictment 04 CR 50013

Ricardo Gallardo, also known as “Solo,” 25 (DOB: 12/11/1978), formerly of 4622 Sunderman, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin, one count of distributing cocaine, one count of possession of cocaine and heroin with intent to distribute, four counts of money laundering, and four counts of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He is being held in federal custody without bail.

David Gallardo, 23 (DOB: 6/10/1980), formerly of 729 Dickerman, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin, one count of distributing cocaine, and one count of possession of cocaine and heroin with intent to distribute. He has been released on bond.

Jose Luis Espinoza, also known as “Chelis,” 26 (DOB: 4/25/1978), formerly of 1315 28th Street, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of conspiring to distribute cocaine and heroin, one count of possession of cocaine and heroin with intent to distribute, one count of money laundering, and one count of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He is being held in federal custody without bail.

Jorge Luna, 29 (DOB: 8/19/1974), 627 Morgan Street, Rockford, Illinois is charged with one count of aiding and abetting a conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, one count of money laundering, and one count of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He has been released on bond.

James Orsinger, 60 (DOB: 11/12/1943), 7670 Burr Oak, Roscoe, Illinois is charged with one count of aiding and abetting a conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, four counts of money laundering, and four counts of engaging in an unlawful monetary transaction. He has been released on bond.

Connie Gesswein, 27 (DOB: 8/21/1976), formerly of 7611 Creek Bend, Rockford, Illinois is charged with controlling a drug storage and distribution enclosure. She has been released on bond.

The newly-formed, DEA task force, is based in Rockford. It currently consists of law enforcement agents and officers from the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Winnebago County Sheriff's Department, the Rockford Police Department, the Boone County Sheriff's Department, and the Belvidere Police Department. In September, the DeKalb County Sheriff's Department is expected to join the task force. This task force focuses primarily on large-scale, multi-jurisdictional drugs trafficking organizations which often require long-term investigations and special investigative techniques. It works closely with existing local and state task forces, including the Metro Narcotics Unit and SLANT, by sharing intelligence and resources.

These cases are being prosecuted in United States District Court by Assistant United States Attorney Joseph C. Pedersen.

Members of the public are reminded that indictments are only charges. Each defendant is entitled to a fair trial at which the government will have the burden of proving his or her guilt beyond a reasonable doubt.

If convicted, Michael Fricks, Lonza Wilson, Ricardo Gallardo, David Gallardo, Jose Espinoza, Jorge Luna, and James Orsinger each face a maximum possible penalty of life imprisonment, a maximum fine of \$4,000,000, and a term of supervised release following their release from prison of at least five years and up to life. Jerry Wilson, who has pleaded guilty, faces the same maximum possible penalty as his co-defendants, Michael Fricks and Lonza Wilson. Wilson's sentencing currently is set for August 20, 2004 at 9:30 a.m. If convicted, Connie Gesswein faces a maximum possible penalty of 20 years of imprisonment, a maximum fine of \$500,000, and a term of supervised release following her release from prison of not more than three years. The actual sentence for each defendant will be determined by the United States District Court, guided by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

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